

EXHIBIT 10  
DATE 1-29-09  
HB 253

January 28, 2009

My name is Tucker Nelson. I apologize I am not present to deliberate this message, but due to time constraints I was unable to make the trip to Helena. I am a sixth generation rancher from the Paradise Valley. As such, I have a vested interest in House Bill No. 253. My ancestors settled the valley in the 1890's and began a way of life that focused on hard work, family values, and an ongoing love for the land. These values have been passed down through the generations and are why a 26-year-old college graduate like myself has returned to the land. I have every intention of holding on to the beautiful piece of open space we call home, and one day handing it on to the next generation. However, this goal does not come without its challenges.

One challenge we have been facing for as long as I have been alive is eliminating the contagious disease of brucellosis. We have done our part by responsibly managing our cattle and keeping the disease out of our herd for the span of my lifetime. To do this, we incur the cost of vaccinating our cattle for the disease every year. We feel that this is our responsibility not only to other producers, but also as stewards of the land and the surrounding ecosystem.

Recently, this disease reasserted itself in our area and now requires more extensive management practices. Now, not only do we vaccinate for brucellosis, we have also tested every cow on our place over 18 months of age for the disease. The problem is this time the disease did not come from cattle, but instead appears to have come from infected wildlife. We as ranchers are able to responsibly manage our livestock, but we do not have the authority to manage wildlife. That authority lies with the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. The Department's mission is to "provide for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources of Montana". They are not required to meet the strict standards of the livestock industry, which requires no animals testing positive for the disease of brucellosis in order to retain "class free status". They are only required to provide "stewardship" for the wildlife, and have a very limited ability to control infected wildlife species. If a wildlife species in Montana tests positive for brucellosis, the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks does not risk losing millions of dollars. On the other hand, if the disease is found in our cattle, the cattle industry in Montana loses millions of dollars. .

The department in Montana that has the ability to control animal diseases, such as brucellosis, is the Department of Livestock. The Department's mission is to "control and eradicate animal diseases, and prevent the transmission of animal diseases to humans". House Bill No. 253 would take the management responsibilities of Yellowstone National Park Bison in Montana away from the Department with the ability to manage a heavily brucellosis infected species and place it in the hands of a department that has a very limited ability to control such a disease. This potentially puts other species, both domestic and wild, at a higher risk of contracting the brucellosis. As a producer, I do my best to responsibly manage my cattle herd for the sake of other producers and the surrounding ecosystem. The approach to the management of a species requiring disease control that House Bill No. 253 puts forth is grossly irresponsible.

House Bill No. 253 not only reissues the management of bison to the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; it also, neglects the fact that the Yellowstone National Park bison are a species requiring disease control. My cattle have not had brucellosis for longer then I have been alive, yet I still responsibly manage the herd to prevent the disease. We, as the ranchers of paradise valley, cannot afford to stay in business if glaringly obvious double standards, such as the one presented in this Bill, continue to be put forward. After all, the last crop we ever grow is a subdivision, and that is neither good for the open space I hold so dear, nor the wildlife that depend upon that open space for their survival. Therefore, I stand in strong opposition to House Bill No. 253.

Tucker Nelson